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Ahead of the Show

Continued from page 5

where this was done, though not with the results that were anticipated.

A New England Drama

IT was in 1890, when Hoyt's "A Temperance Town" was playing at the Park Theater in Boston. Hoyt, the author, was a member of the New Hampshire Legislature, and had been much perturbed because his fellow solons had seen fit to make the State's appropriation for a building at the World's Fair in Chicago only five thousand dollars. He thought it ought to be twice that much, and said so on various occasions. On one of these his advance agent, who chanced to be in town, suggested a brilliant scheme.

"Let's take 'A Temperance Town' up to Concord," said he, "and give a special performance for the Legislature. They will be so flattered and pleased that when you run across the street to the Capitol and make a speech asking for a bigger appropriation, they'll pass it in a minute. We can play a matinee up there and get back in time for the evening performance here."

Hoyt fell in with the plan, and the entire outfit left Boston in the morning and arrived at Concord, New Hampshire, where a special performance was arranged for. The Legislature was in session when the company arrived, and Hoyt thought he would make the best of his time; so he went to the Capitol and made his speech for the enlarged appropriation, after which he announced that the performance would be given at once at White's Opera House, a few steps from the State House. The pleased legislators hurried over and saw the play; but when they got back to the State House and voted on Hoyt's motion for a bigger appropriation, they buried it almost unanimously!

The reason was that they had taken the play, which was a satire on the Vermont prohibition law, as an affront not only to New Hampshire's sister State but to themselves as well, and had recognized many New Hampshire characters in the piece, so faithfully to his memory had Hoyt drawn some of them. The appropriation did not go through—and Hoyt blamed his advance agent!

The Tragedy in the Box

TRAGEDY has resulted from some of the best arranged schemes of the press agent. Such an instance occurred at the American Theater in New York some seven or eight years ago. The publicity promoter of the attraction had arranged for a young man to rise in a box as the woman star was singing a song and pretend to take poison. Then the story would come out that the man was much in love with the star, had written her many fervid notes, and had been told not to bother her any more. The notes were already prepared and had been received by the star by mail. She knew nothing of the plot to boom her in the papers.

Well, according to schedule, the young man rose in the box, and, before the crowded house, put a small vial to his lips and drank the contents. Then he fell to the floor of the box, and the excitement that was expected to ensue came along. But when the doctor arrived they found that the young man had actually taken poison, a good dose, and only for their hardest efforts he would have died an involuntary suicide. The press agent was obliged to confess his share in the plot, and besides losing his position he was fortunate to escape imprisonment.

Doesn't Go Nowadays

DOES this sort of advertising pay? Managers used to think so, and the advance agent who could concoct the wildest schemes of booming the play or the star was the one who received the highest salary. The man who dreamed of milk baths for Anna Held enjoyed the results in the way of increased emolument and steady engagements. In that particular instance I have no doubt that the happily thought out invention worked well; but in the majority of cases, since the public has become better educated in things theatrical as well as wiser in all matters concerning advertising, I believe that circus methods have anything but beneficial results. Except in the cases of clown comedians and flashy comic opera soubrettes, the public likes to regard its stage entertainers as seriously inclined people, who look upon their profession with respect, and do not countenance being advertised by diamond robberies or rescues of old ladies from beneath the hoofs of prancing steeds.

The managers have come to realize this too, with the result that the day of the old fashioned advance man has passed, and his

place has been taken by a dignified young man who goes into a city ahead of his attraction and announces its coming in a sane, sober manner, without any blowing of trumpets or booming of cannon.

Billing the Star

BUT there is one trick the old fashioned advance man used to play to good advantage that the advance man of to-day still uses.

It is often one of the duties of the man ahead of the show to secure hotel accommodations for the star, so that she or he may not be troubled about engaging rooms. Or, even if the advance man has not done this, he makes sure to find out at what hotel the star is going to stop and acts accordingly. Having plastered the city thoroughly with lithographs of his star, he will then devote special efforts on that portion leading from the railroad station to the star's hotel. The fences along the route the actor or actress must travel will be covered with his billing, the bare walls will shriek with his name and face, and the hotel lobby will contain at least one big, smashing photograph or poster. And the street leading from the hotel to the theater will be similarly treated; so that the star, going to work, will see how the advance man has worked and will say:

"Well, he certainly has done it thoroughly! I'm the best billed attraction in this town, all right!"

And, as he says this, the man ahead of the show is a hundred miles away, in some other town, doing the same things over and over again; but with at least one set purpose—to make a showing along the routes his star will take.

CARRIED OFF BY A LION

TWO men at least have given accounts of their sensations when they were carried off by lions,—the great explorer Livingstone and a man named Wolhuter, a ranger of game preserves in the Transvaal. Wolhuter's adventure is not secondary in interest to Livingstone's experience. His story, which was attested by the certificate of the magistrate of the district, was substantially as follows:

He was riding along a Kafir path about an hour after sunset. It had been a long march, and he had pushed on ahead of his companions. His dog barked at something, and a moment later Wolhuter saw a lion crouching close to him on the right-hand side. The ranger turned his horse sharply, a circumstance that no doubt caused the lion to miss the spring.

Wolhuter was unseated. At the same moment he saw another lion coming from the opposite direction. The horse rushed off, with the first lion in pursuit, and the second lion picked Wolhuter up almost before he touched the ground, and gripped him by the right shoulder in such a position that he was face up, with his legs and body dragging underneath the beast. The lion trotted down the path, uttering a loud, growling purring noise.

Wolhuter's sensations were not those of Livingstone, who said he was in a state of apathy, with entire absence of pain, during the time the lion had him. The game ranger suffered terribly, both mentally and physically, and saw no possible way of escape. The lion took him nearly two hundred yards.

Suddenly Wolhuter bethought him of his sheath knife, which he carried in his belt behind his right hip. On reaching a large tree with overhanging roots the lion stopped, whereupon Wolhuter stabbed him twice in the right side with his left hand. It was ascertained afterward that the first stab touched the bottom of the heart, and that the second one slit it down for some distance.

The lion immediately dropped Wolhuter, and again the game ranger struck him, this time in the throat, severing an artery.

The lion jumped back and stood facing him, growling. Wolhuter scrambled to his feet, shouting at the top of his lungs. He expected the beast to come at him again; but it did not. Instead, it turned slowly, and, still growling, went a few paces. Soon its growls turned to moans; these, in turn, ceased; and the ranger knew that the beast was then dead.

Wolhuter got up the tree as fast as his injured arm would permit, and hardly was he seated when the first lion, which had been after the horse, came back on the trail of blood. By this time the plucky ranger was so faint that he tied himself to the tree to prevent himself from falling out.

He was found by his companions, who took him to a place of safety. The lion he had killed was an old male, and the weapon used was an ordinary sheath knife.



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